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601 Coola social organization, and of the absence of standardized obligations based upon specific relationships.

Slaves

567 Since a slave was[11] without status in the Bella Coola com-
[554] munity, it is perhaps incorrect to include a description of slavery in a chapter on social organization; but as slaves lived in the Bella Coola villages, it seems reasonable to include them when dealing with the different units of the tribe. It was
162 impossible to obtain an accurate estimate of their number in
567 Bella Coola; slavery has been so long abandoned that the present natives could only hazard vague guesses. Judging from conversational remarks by elderly men, it seems probable that in the old days there was a considerable slave population in every Bella Coola village, comprising at times as much as thirty to forty per cent of the total population.

567 When a party raided a village most of the inhabitants were
727 slain, but some, especially children, young adults, or famous chiefs were captured. As far as could be learned, once a captive had reached Bella Coola he was in little danger, since torture or systematic slaying after the heat of battle had subsided was not a Bella Coola characteristic. The leader of the expedition retained many of the captives as his own slaves, and distributed others among his followers. Anyone, chief
[422] or commoner, could own slaves in the same way that he could own any other type of goods.

567 Like any other commodity, slaves were bought and sold.
437 The Bella Coola were usually so well provided with salmon that they were able to exchange these fish with the members
[622] of other tribes for slaves. Lack of strong chieftainship among
[726] the Bella Coola hindered their success in war, so that most of
[431] their slaves were obtained by trade. To the same category
[773] belong those obtained as presents at potlatches. If, however, a member of one of the tribes on the lower Fraser River was

[648] [11]One of the first effects of the white man's establishment in British Columbia was the freeing of all slaves. Consequently the past tense is used in this section.

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given as a slave to a Bella Coola, he was treated as a guest.[18] Slaves were bartered between Bella Coola individuals as a matter of course. Their value depended on sex, ability, and industriousness, as well as on supply and demand. When there was an over-supply, the value of a slave fell to twenty or thirty salmon, but whenever an owner found that someone wished to purchase a particular slave he endeavoured to raise the price. If a foreigner borrowed goods in Bella Coola he usually had to leave a relative as pledge. Thus, not many years ago, a *Xuxais* Indian, from near Ootsa Lake, borrowed goods from a Kimsquit man and left his son as pledge. The goods were not returned, so the son was sold as a slave to the people of Kitimat.

It was not uncommon for a Bella Coola to lose his freedom by gambling. At *lehql* especially, a player who had exhausted his goods not infrequently wagered his children, or in extreme cases, himself. If he lost, his children, or himself, became the property of the winner. Unless speedily repurchased by some relative, such slaves were usually sold or given away at the first opportunity to a member of a foreign tribe, since it was considered improper for a man to hold a member of his own tribe in servitude. The same course of action was taken on those rare occasions when one Bella Coola village fought against its neighbour and prisoners were taken.

To the Bella Coola, who still consider a man's "power" in the land as dependent to a considerable extent on his ancestral myth, a slave's greatest misfortune lay in the fact that he had no ancestral home, and hence no rights.

"No slaves came to earth with the first people," they say.

A slave was a stranger in a strange land, unsupported by a chain of ancestors reaching back to the beginning of time. On the whole, captives taken in war were better treated than other slaves since it was felt that such a misfortune might occur to anyone at any time. They were frequently ransomed by their

[18] This is said to be an ancient practice, due to the fact that several of the forefathers of the Bella Coola came to earth in that region and were on friendly terms with the inhabitants. It is conceivable that this tradition may have reference to the breaking away of the Bella Coola from the main Salish stock.

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of their occurrence in most ancestral myths.[6] There seems to be no mythological explanation for the casting of a copper into the fire after the passing of the representation of a deceased relative, but the desire of chiefs to use them at potlatches is the result of their use under similar circumstances by their ancestors. Some ancestral myths lack reference to coppers, but their use is common to all, whether or not embodied in such. It is said to be easier for a chief to acquire coppers if they had been used by his ancestors, but this is not essential.

When arranging for the appearance of a dead relative, the donor of a potlatch is careful either to possess a copper, or to be able to borrow one at the right moment. As soon as the masked figure has disappeared, the donor stands up, breaks or bends his copper, and throws it into the fire "to make bone for the deceased." No matter how valuable a copper may have been, it is now worthless; its value has been expended on the purpose for which it has just been employed. It lies unheeded in the flames, a valueless article belonging to no one.

At some convenient time, either hours or days later, any chief may remove the copper and give it to a poor man, only taking care to choose an individual who has not recently received one. It is said that the gift is "to patch his canoe." It is now the poor man's property, but it has no value, since no goods have been expended for it. The new owner straightens and repairs it, if necessary by riveting on the broken piece, thus making it ready for further use. The poor man may keep the copper for years, or it may be only a few weeks before some chief, preparing for a potlatch, offers, perhaps, $20, for it. In the old days, values were computed in slaves, canoes, salmon, and other commodities, but now in dollars. If two chiefs should happen to want it, the poor man may haggle about the price, though in such a case the two rivals would probably agree amicably rather than lower their dignity by seeming to be interested in a matter of money. It is to the advantage of a

[6] Abalone-shells and moosehides are treasured for the same reason; the former are mentioned in several origin myths, the latter in two at least.

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chief to pay somewhat lavishly, since the value of the copper depends on the amount expended on it.

The $20 received by the poor man must not be casually spent. He is expected to invite the whole village to his house, otherwise he would never again be given a copper. The heralds call everyone to the house, the singers as usual being the first to arrive. They beat out the *kusiut* song of anyone, to which the owner dances; the songs are used one after another, until almost every member of the society has danced. *Sisaok* songs may then be used in the same way. Since the supernatural beings are not present, the rite has no religious significance; it is merely a social affair. At the close of the dancing, the poor man distributes food to all, equivalent in value to the money received. It is probable that poor men sometimes give away slightly less than they have received, although any noticeable laxity in this would be punished by the receipt of no further coppers. The recipient of a copper from a fire derives no direct gain from it, though it is to his indirect advantage, since a person who has given away food is likely to receive larger presents on future occasions than one who has not.

Meanwhile the chief owning the copper is unable to use it at his potlatch since the value, dependent on the goods expended for it, is only $20, a sum so small that to use it would be insulting to his dead ancestor. There are several ways of increasing its value:

(1) *By Painting.* Taking advantage of some ceremony when a number of people are present, the owner gives a carpenter $10, for example, with a request that he paint on his copper a representation of the crest used by his, the owner's, first ancestor, when coming to this earth. Henceforth the value of the copper is $30.

(2) *By Naming.* The Bella Coola say that among the Kwakiutl names are given to almost all coppers; in Bella Coola it is a rare practice. Occasionally, a chief creates a name for his copper and validates this by presents to all the

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village at some ceremony, exactly as a child's name is conferred. Designations are chosen with respect to the appearance of the copper, or some incident connected with its history. Such a designation is *Qwaixwos*, "Begrimed," applied to a copper thrown many times into the fire. If, for instance, $50 be expended for a name, the value of a $30 copper is henceforth $80. 435 552 556*

(3) *By Making Gifts.* The owner of a copper can increase its value by calling together the other chiefs of his village, and sometimes of adjacent ones as well. After the customary meal, the owner expounds the history of his possession, giving details of its value. Then he passes it to one of his guests, who, unless he wishes to insult his host, must hold it upright, that is, with the broad end uppermost. The owner gives it in turn to each of his guests. To validate the display, the owner must bestow gifts on all present, and the total value of these is added to the value of the copper. Such gifts are not strictly returnable, although it is customary for chiefs to show their generosity and prowess to their fellows by a later repayment with interest. 435 556* [578] [426]

By these means the original purchaser of a worthless copper can increase its value to such a point that it can be used at a potlatch. There is no established custom about this. Coppers are not as valuable in Bella Coola as, for instance, at Fort Rupert, and it is unlikely that any are ever worth more than $300, and the average value is probably between $150 and $200. Considerable time is required to raise the value of a copper to this sum and the owner in many cases finds that he has all the other requirements before his copper is ready for use. In that case, he tries to buy another which has been raised to sufficient worth by its owner. Everyone knows the values of the different coppers in the community, and the intending purchaser calls his fellow-chiefs to his house and offers to buy one valued, for example, at $150. If the owner consents to sell, he usually endeavours to get as much as possible, perhaps $175. The sum is publicly paid and is henceforth the value of the copper, which is transmitted to the new [171] 435 437 556*

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435 owner with a statement of its history and the amount expended
● 437 on it. The purchase of a copper is, therefore, a good business
* 556 transaction, and it might be assumed that a chief with keen
commercial instinct would endeavour to acquire as many as
[171] possible. This is said to be the case in Fort Rupert, but in
[183] Bella Coola public opinion is averse to the obtaining of coppers
unless for use at potlatches. As every ambitious chief hopes
to give potlatches, he can always claim that the acquisition of
a copper is for this end, and that the sale of it is from a kindly
desire to assist a fellow-chief who is nearer the desired goal
than he himself. Consequently, the sale of coppers is tolerably
common, and a chief is not considered to be mercenary unless
he sells too frequently.

426 The intending donor of a potlatch can now proceed to the
* 556 ceremony, secure in the possession of a copper worthy to be
thrown on the fire after the passage of his deceased relative.
In addition, he may own another copper of too small value for
this purpose. As described in the last chapter, he repeatedly
calls together the inhabitants of his own village to rites which
he validates by the distribution of presents, and at which he
also gives away investment presents. He may decide to use
his second copper for this purpose. All investment presents,
[558] which are given only to men of standing in the community,
must be repaid with interest unless the recipient is willing to
decline in popular estimation; but when a gift of this kind
consists of a copper, a return of 100 per cent is expected on the
transaction. Bestowal of a copper in such circumstances is not
spoken of as an investment present, *kəlämkusnäm*, but as
änuχopˁ, which has the definite significance of something that
must be returned with 100 per cent interest. If the value of
the copper were $25 before this bestowal, it is now $50, since
the new owner must repay this amount to the chief planning
to give the potlatch. The new owner can use the copper in
any way he desires; if he repays a previous indebtedness, he
cancels $50 by giving it; whereas if he bestows it as *änuχopˁ*,
announcement is made that its value is $50, and he expects to